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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 000916

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/16/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [SY](#) [LE](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKISH FOREIGN MINISTRY ON HARIRI MURDER AND SYRIA

REF: A. STATE 272178

[1](#)B. ANKARA 296

(U) Classified by DCM Robert Deutsch, E.O. 12958, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Responding to our approach (ref A) by averring that evidence of Syrian involvement in the Hariri murder is currently unclear, Turkish MFA interlocutors show no inclination to deviate from the line of warning Turkish-Syrian relationship and seem to ignore the larger point that Syrian troop and security presence destabilizes Lebanon and threatens fair elections. We see no evidence the MFA is currently inclined to press the Syrians to withdraw troops and security forces. We reiterated our opposition to the Turkey/Syria free trade agreement (ref B). End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) DCM used ref A with Turkish MFA Middle East DG Celikkol and poloff delivered points to Middle East Department Head Bozay. Celikkol (Turkey's immediate former Ambassador to Syria) responded to DCM by asking whether the U.S. has evidence of Syrian involvement. DCM replied that is not the issue; the issue is pressing the Syrians to support a rapid investigation and to live up to UNSCR 1559.

[1](#)3. (C) Bozay agreed the Hariri murder is terrorism and unacceptable, and that the perpetrators should be brought to justice. He also agreed that Syria should obey UNSCR 1559. He claimed the GOT "always" emphasizes this in discussions with the Syrians. Bozay said Turkey will condemn the Syrian involvement in Hariri's murder if a connection is established, adding that such a connection has not yet been established.

[1](#)4. (C) Both appeared to either resist or perhaps not grasp the larger point that Syrian troop and security presence is destabilizing and threatens Lebanon's upcoming elections. Asked whether the MFA plans to press the Syrians to withdraw troops, Bozay responded that it is unclear who is responsible for Hariri's murder. He predicted Turkey will not take any such initiative vis-a-vis Syria now, but will wait to see what the UNSC does.

[1](#)5. (C) The MFA issued two bland statements on February 14 condemning Hariri's murder, expressing condolences and praising Hariri's contributions to Turkish-Lebanese relations. Neither statement contains even a veiled reference to Syria. Bozay told us that FM Gul personally received Lebanon's Ambassador on February 15 and extended his personal condolences. Bozay asserted that the statements and the visit should be "signals to partners like you and to our neighbors." We responded that a direct message to Syria, like the one in ref A, is better.

[1](#)6. (C) With Bozay, we took the opportunity to reiterate our opposition to the Turkey/Syria free trade agreement and urge Turkey not to ratify it. Bozay reiterated the reasons for the agreement, adding that it is an EU requirement to harmonize trade with countries like Syria that have an EU association agreements.

[1](#)7. (C) Comment: Based the responses we received, we doubt the MFA is currently inclined to press the Syrians to withdraw troops and security forces. End Comment.

EDELMAN